The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 46
Issue 4 *December*

Article 12

2019

Review of *Social Work Practice and Social Welfare Policy in the United States: A History* by Philip R. Popple

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Philip R. Popple, *Social Work Practice and Social Welfare Policy in the United States: A History.* Oxford University Press (2018), 392 pages, $65.00 (paperback).

In this book, Popple pulls together a history of the U.S. welfare state and its associated profession, social work, with impressive depth and detail. The author is particularly keen to point out that while the histories and trajectories of each are cojoined, they are not necessarily one and the same. The impulses, currents, and even tensions that shape each, however, have commingled into a story that many have deemed "exceptional." The outline follows a structure familiar to overviews of this type, including previous works by Popple himself, as well as by Michael Katz, Walter Trattner and others. It includes chapter-length presentations on the Pre-Colonial origins and the English Poor Laws, the Progressive Era, developments leading to and during the Great Depression, the New Deal, the Second World War period, and the War on Poverty. Popple is innovative in the presentation of parallel chapters to each period that address historical developments in the theory, practice and organizational infrastructure of the profession. Additionally, being the first new social work history written in over twenty years, it includes a pair of chapters devoted to the post-1974 period: "Ending Welfare as We Know It" and "Social Work in the Conservative 21st Century Welfare State."

The most important contribution made in this work, as Popple describes it, is to survey social welfare history, addressing the needs and reviving the vision segment of the social work profession. In specific, Popple couples traditional coverage of periods within the development of the U.S. welfare state with attention to "the lives, work, and perspectives of the practitioners charged with actually implementing the plans of elites and negotiating with the intended beneficiaries of these plans" (p. 5). This work indeed provides a rich portrayal of the policy, theory, and practice of social welfare in America.

The book has many clear strengths. Popple is particularly adept at drawing out fundamental divisions in philosophies and approaches that have shaped the American welfare state and the social work profession. For instance, he contrasts rational humanistic progressivism, which is grounded in a social work practice akin to scientific management, with radical humanistic

progressivism, that gave way to practice in settlements and has links to labor and the women's movement. Throughout, the author continually returns to important tensions, as for instance the recognition that for "however liberal the motivations and intentions of advocates for social welfare may be, the social function is conservative: maintaining a smoothly operating society with the least possible threat to the status quo" (p. 7).

Popple grounds coverage of periods and specific points within a broader narrative that identities the actual people, the clients, caseworkers, activists, policy-makers, etc. who populated the times. The chapter "Progress in Social Welfare, 1895–1929" for example, begins with the birth of Robert Nash Baldwin, a Mayflower descendant who went on to direct a settlement house, Self-Cultural Hall in St. Louis, and then led the newly formed American Civil Liberties Union. Such stories bring the history to life, making for an enjoyable read even while covering such a breadth of material.

There are weaknesses here also, however. This work draws from the author's previous writings, pairing chapters on historical coverage with those on evolution of the professional. As a result, repetition taxes the reader. This book could have been edited and condensed without losing impact. The bulk of the book, as noted, deals with pre-1974 history. Only the final chapters are devoted to the most recent period. Moreover, the treatment of all periods, while skillfully grounded in narrative, lacks revision that many call for in light of contemporary social consciousness contoured by the Occupy, Black Lives Matter, Make America Great Again, and #METOO movements. While the author does discuss the impact that earlier work, such as Michael Harrington's 1962 book *The Other America*, has had in better understanding the American story, Popple maintains a muted tone toward the systemic power imbalances of pervasiveness of exploitive colonialism, racism, xenophobia, sexism, and heterosexual normativity that thread through our past and are being contested in the present. An example of this muted tone comes as Popple is describing what we generally think of as progress, where he writes, "…as the feudal system declined, trade routes opened, new industries developed, the New World began to open up, and in general the potential for great prosperity was everywhere" (p. 18). In another section, Popple acknowledges that the history of social welfare (especially of its

early periods) is "largely a white history" (p. 126) but devotes little attention to rectifying that history or even drawing out the implications of this blind spot.

In summary, Popple has bound together a thorough and useful history of the U.S. welfare state and its profession, social work. He does so through compelling narrative and with tremendous skill for drawing out the theoretical and philosophical lines that have shaped this development. It could easily be placed on the list of required reading for current professionals.

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Sarah Bowen, Joslyn Brenton and Sinikka Elliott, *Pressure Cooker: Why Home Cooking Won't Solve Our Problems and What to do About It*. Oxford University Press (2019), 337 pages, $16.96 (paperback).

This is a wonderful book! It talks about food in America—its procurement, its preparation, its personnel, and its problems. The data on which the book draws is a pool of semi-structured interviews with 168 women, mostly mothers and primary-caregiving grandmothers. Of that number, 138 were from poor- or working-class families, with the remaining 30 from middle- and upper-class families. They all live in Raleigh, NC and in two nearby counties. Additional material (research methods are detailed in an appendix) came from some 250 hours of ethnographic observations of 12 families from the low-income group. Nine of these families are featured throughout the book in the book in observational narrative form. The book is organized around seven "foodie themes"—You Are What You Eat; Deep Roots; Make Time for Food; The Family that Eats Together Stays Together; Know What's on Your Plate; Shop Smarter, Eat Better; Bring Good Food to Others; and Food Brings People Together.

The overarching theme of the book is that of food insecurity, which is driven by several factors. One of these factors is gender. Most of all food organization, from purchase through prep to cleanup, is done by women. Men are present, sometimes appreciative, but (grilling aside, I noticed, and I must confess